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Sara Ramo appropriates everyday elements and scenes, displacing them from their original context and rearranging them in her videos, photographs, collages, sculptures and installations. Often she uses personal memory, fiction or fairy tales in order to create unexpected settings and give new meaning to what is around us. Ordinary objects gain surprising value or scale, revealing our world as vulnerable and ambiguous. By contrasting order and disorder, emptiness and fullness, presence and absence, Ramo encourages us to question the mental and physical spaces in which we live and the values attributed to our knowledge of things.

Born to a Brazilian mother and a Spanish father, Ramo lived as a child with her family between Madrid, Araxá, Goiânia and Belo Horizonte, where she later studied art at the Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais. Her work is deeply informed by her personal history, exploring the intimate construction of domestic, urban and representational spaces. *Como aprender o que acontece na normalidade das coisas* (How to Learn What Happens in the Natural Order of Things, 2002), for example, is a series of six photographic diptychs depicting the artist's bathroom before and after she had arranged all the objects usually hidden in cupboards and shelves on the bathtub, sink and floor. The two-channel video *Quase Cheio, Quase Vazio* (Almost Full, Almost Empty, 2008) was shot in the neighbourhood of Madrid where she spent her early childhood. Empty alleys around and between brick buildings appear as a stage for seemingly magical occurrences: a ball or cardboard box apparently moving of its own volition, styrofoam flakes falling like snow.

The video *A banda dos sete* (The Band of Seven, 2010), presents a group of musicians playing the same tune over and over again on clarinet, melodica, drum, bass, xylophone, cymbals and percussion, whilst magically circulating a fragment of a freestanding wall in the landscape. One is immediately reminded of a glockenspiel clock or a music box. The band of seven instrumentalists emerges from the left-hand corner of the

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wall and when it disappears around the right-hand corner, the tune fades and disappears, only to become audible again when the band comes back into sight. The configuration and number of musicians changes with each emergence of the group.

A banda dos sete was produced in collaboration with the musician Ivan Canteli, and explores the manifold possibilities for the performance and interpretation of a composition, but by no means exhausts all possible options. As a series of variations on one motif and an exercise in repetition and difference, it is a synthesis of the themes present throughout Ramo's work. The masked and costumed musicians form a mysterious, almost carnevalesque parade, but instead of joy, they evoke a sensation of longing or mourning—perhaps, in Lacanian terms, for a loss of 'completeness'. The 'theatre of the absurd', is also recalled, a term first used by Martin Esslin in 1960 in reference to the works of Samuel Beckett, Arthur Adamov, Eugène Ionesco and Jean Genet. Similar to the Surrealists, these absurdist playwrights used imagery, subtext, mythology and allegory, and presented their characters caught in hopeless situations, destined to repeat a series of meaningless actions. Ramo's work in general is clearly based on this literary tradition, but *A banda dos sete* uses the techniques of film. While the camera remains still, filming the twenty-minute piece with one fixed picture frame, the characters are pushed around the blank screen-like wall on camera trolleys, their coats blowing in the wind.

Ramo's powerful images based on early memories and sensations of solitude and confusion, often charged with metaphors, are not limited to her photographs and videos. Since the mid-2000s, she has been producing a series of large-scale installations, for which she entirely transforms exhibition spaces into temporary construction sites or other surprising arrangements, emphasising the transitory quality of their ambience. Our spatial experience of installations such as *Pano de Fundo* (Backdrop, 2012), *Legado* (Legacy, 2012) or *Geografia do Lastro ou a Riqueza dos Outros* (Geography of the Ballast or the Wealth of Others, 2012), involve reorientation and renegotiation, a key characteristic of Ramo's work in general.

For the 2009 Venice Biennale, taking the Brothers Grimm fairy tale as a starting point, Ramo created the site-specific installation *Sobre João e Maria* (On Hansel and Gretel, 2009) for one of the abandoned houses in the Arsenale's Garden of the Virgins, introducing sculptural elements into the three rooms of the small building. The famous story about the loss of childhood was not literally illustrated, but provided the storyline for a series of encounters that illustrate the experience of discovering that things are not always what they seem.